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By: David Ruiz

It was the year 1975, the Vietnam War had just ended and many people started working their way to the United States so they can have a better life not only for themselves but for their children. Maria Cano Martinez worked as an employee at the University of Iowa in the medical records department. She started working there in the year 1958. In the year 1975, Martinez started a language interpreter program at the University of Iowa Hospitals and clinics. Her main focus was to have the employees at the hospitals and clinics to be bilingual so that the people who don't speak English would be able to understand the information that they are given.

This program is something that Martinez was very proud of. Not only was she able to start having more employees speak more than one language, she was also able to inspire hospitals outside of Iowa to do the same. Yes, Martinez did come to United States from Mexico in the late 1920s early 1930s with her family. Now there weren't many people who spoke Spanish. Yes there were many undocumented citizens starting to migrate into the United States, but there weren't many of them working in the medical field. This was a starting to become a really big issue in the United States. There were so many people migrating from different countries that it was going to be really difficult for them to communicate with anyone else besides the people that spoke their language. There were people coming from south of the border and people coming in from countries from Europe and Asia. There would also be an increase in Vietnamese and or Chinese Mandarin speaking people. This is because on April 30th, 1975, the Vietnamese War came to an end. This meant that that there would be more people coming

into the United States that would have trouble communicating with people. This wasn't just happening in the 1970s, this still happens today because people believe that the United States is the best country in the world when in reality, it really isn't.

Martinez's goal was to have more bilingual employees at the hospitals at the University of Iowa. She promised her dad that no one should experience what her dad went through when they first arrived in the United States. "She witnessed the difficulties experienced by her Spanish speaking father as a patient at Mercy Hospital," (Mason, 2016, par. 3). After realizing that her father had trouble communicating with the people at the hospital, she knew that something had to be done. "I vowed that if Dad made it, I'd do something to help others in similar situations," (Mason, 2016, par. 3). Martinez did just that by establishing the Spanish language interpreter program at the University of Iowa Hospitals.

Fast forward fifteen years later, The Daily Iowan published a newspaper article titled Hospital translating staff aids non-English speakers Spanish, Asian languages in demand. This newspaper article was written by Risa Grudena, and it was published on The Daily Iowan on Friday, September 28th, 1990. This article seems to target the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Also, this article brings up Maria Cano Martinez, who was the woman who established the Spanish interpreter program



at the University of Iowa Hospitals in 1975. It seems that there are more people migrating to the United States from countries all over the world.

In the year 1990, there were high requests by patients at the hospitals asking for translators. This was because the hospitals did not have many bilingual employees, and patients would not be able to understand what doctors and nurses would be saying to them. In the article it says, "There were 1,270 non-English speaking patients requesting translator services between July 1989 and June 1990," (Gruden, 1990, par. 5). The article also says that the majority of patients spoke Spanish. However, there were a good amount of patients who knew sign language or Southeast Asian languages. The article was only written a couple of months after this issue. Because of this, this means that there are not enough employees who speak a language other than English. The hospitals at the University of Iowa need to hire enough bilingual or trilingual employees so that people who do not speak English are able to communicate with the doctors and nurses.

Hospitals at the University of Iowa need to focus on hiring more translators because 15 years ago, before the newspaper article was published, the Vietnam War had ended. With the Vietnam War ending, there would be more people migrating to the United States and a majority of them would be from Vietnam meaning that they would not be able to understand the employees if there were to go the hospital. The article says, "The hospital is presently looking for Vietnamese and Mandarin Chinese interpreters," (Gruden, 1990, 14). During this time of the year, the hospitals were still looking for translators. There are always people trying to migrate to the United States because they want their families to have the best life possible, but what good is it if they aren't able to communicate with people who speak their native language?

References

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